

VZCZCXRO5603
RR RUEHRG
DE RUEHBR #0540/01 1141203
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 231203Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1483
INFO RUEHSB/AMEMBASSY HARARE 0039
RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE 7942
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 6052
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 1923

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRASILIA 000540

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/23/2018
TAGS: [BR](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: BRAZIL "MONITORS" ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS

REF: A. BRASILIA 00064
[1](#)B. BRASILIA 00057

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Phillip Chicola for reasons
1.4 b and d

Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Brazil's surprising decision to participate in monitoring Zimbabwe's elections was not what it initially appeared. Although Brazil was among those countries invited to serve as an observer, it was the participation of a federal deputy as an observer on behalf of an NGO that forced Brazil's Ministry of External Relations (MRE) into an observer role. Although the Brazilian deputy was critical of the process, the Brazilian Ambassador uncharacteristically made several comments in the media. He criticized Zimbabwe's opposition for declaring an early victory and described Zimbabwe's elections as "exemplary." In the end, MRE says that it never had an official delegation engaged in election monitoring. But the incident showed that Brazil's increasing global engagement will make it more difficult to maintain a low-profile on controversial issues. For now, MRE appears determined to follow its usual course on such controversial matters by making as few waves as possible and maintaining a friendly relationship with the Zimbabwean Government. End Summary.

Drawn Into the Fray

[1](#)2. (SBU) Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe's administration offered countries that have never voted against it in international fora or otherwise criticized it to participate in "election monitoring." Among those invited were Venezuela, China, Iran, and Russia. MRE, which generally avoids placing itself in situations that might require taking a controversial stance against another country, had its hand forced in this case by Brazilian Federal Deputy Antonio Carlos Pannunzio (PSDB -- Brazilian Social Democracy Party, Sao Paulo State), who agreed to monitor the elections on behalf of an NGO. This forced Brazilian Ambassador to Harare Raul de Taunay to observe along with the deputy. Pannunzio left the elections early, criticizing the process, leaving Taunay alone to assess the situation, but Taunay uncharacteristically made several public comments, reported in the media, in which he criticized Zimbabwe's opposition for declaring an early victory and described Zimbabwe's elections process as "exemplary." Taunay heads one of Brazil's growing number of single officer posts in Africa, part of MRE's South-South diplomatic efforts to gain African support for its international ambitions.

A Difference of Opinion

[1](#)3. (SBU) Poloff met with Deputy Pannunzio in his office on April 2 to discuss his thoughts on the election. Pannunzio

explained that he was not asked to observe the elections at the behest of the GOB, but received an urgent invitation from the NGO Lawyers for Human Rights. He said that, from his perspective on the ground, the elections were well monitored by a variety of international observers and the election stations were in order; however, he stressed that he was not naive enough to think that his brief stint in Harare constituted real "election observation." His assessment from his brief time there is that there is an incredible desire for change, especially with the infrastructure in chaos and no respect for human rights. He also noted that the delay (at the time only a few days) was unacceptable and "worrying" for him. He said that the results were known by officials soon after voting closed. Ambassador Taunay provided him all of his logistical support during his visit, he said, but did not work with Taunay in the role of observer.

¶4. (C) In discussions with Poloff, MRE was on the defensive with regard to the Ambassador Taunay's comments. Taunay said that he did not see any problems in the early delay of releasing the results, saying that "according to the electoral calendar, the announcement of results was foreseen as occurring between March 30 and April 1. Therefore, it is within the parameters. Delays are normal. Here it's not like a Swiss timepiece." He also said that the opposition was premature in celebrating its victory as it did during the last election; he said that only a fraction of the results had been evaluated when they made their announcement. Regarding press reports implying that MRE was willing to cover up election irregularities to gain support for Brazil's goal of obtaining a UN Security Council seat with African Union support, MRE Africa II Division's Camila Silva Leao d'Araujo Olsen stressed that not all countries are in as advanced stages of democracy as others, by and handed Poloff

BRASILIA 00000540 002 OF 002

an op-ed from an MRE official rejecting the accusation. There were other observers, including Uruguay and South Africa (a careful choice of the more credible), and the EU and US Ambassadors were also accredited to observe at the time the elections. When Poloff mentioned that the USG was not invited to send an official observer delegation to the election process overall, she revealed that the GOB actually had never taken up the Zimbabwean offer to send a delegation to monitor elections. She said that MRE passed the invitation around within the government, but that no one was willing to act as an observer.

Comment

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Although it appeared Brazil might at last be taking a more assertive position with regard to democracy than it traditionally has (ref B), that truth is that the GOB responded to the offer to act as an observer to Zimbabwe's election in a much more typical way. Brazil's presence in Zimbabwe is itself part of a broader development. The GOB is pushing its South-South strategy with a strong focus on Africa (ref A), largely with an eye to Brazil's effort to gain support for high-level positions in international fora, in particular the UNSC seat. By the end of this year, Brazil will have doubled its presence in Africa to 34 embassies since the beginning of President Lula's first term in 2003. However, Harare is one of Brazil's Ambassador-only posts, and Taunay's statements, made after serving over a year there, may be an indication that coordination between such posts and Brasilia is proving difficult. Moreover, in Brasilia, the entire African continent is currently covered by just ten officers, some of whom are in the midst of preparations to go overseas themselves. As Brazil becomes more recognized as a global player, it will undoubtedly become more difficult to keep a low profile and avoid taking a position on challenging issues. For now, MRE appears determined to follow its usual course on such controversial matters by making as few waves as possible and maintaining a friendly relationship with the Zimbabwean Government. End Comment.
SOBEL